

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 16, 2005

A LOCAL DOG HAS HER DAY AT WESTMINSTER



GLOBE PHOTO/JOE TABACCA

Betsy and breeder, handler, and co-owner Anne Bowes compete at the Westminster Dog Show yesterday.

Win or lose, Betsy the corgi and her owners are thrilled to be at the show

By Bella English
GLOBE STAFF

NEW YORK — Anne Bowes was nervous. Betsy was having a bad hair day.

"She doesn't look as good as she did last week," said Bowes, the Duxbury woman who breeds, handles, and co-owns Betsy, a 2-year-old Pembroke Welsh corgi competing yesterday at the Westminster Dog Show at Madison Square Garden. The show sold out for the first time in its 129-year history.

Betsy was shedding, which corgis do several weeks before going into heat. Fur was flying from her grooming table. "I knew her hair would be a problem," Bowes said yesterday, just hours before Betsy would compete with 11 other corgis. But she had bought special shampoo to give Betsy's hair more body and predicted things would turn out fine.

Bowes's grooming box rivals that of a Hollywood stylist, with an array of combs, brushes, sprays, and chalk. "We put chalk on her feet and the bridge of her nose to make them look whiter," she explained. "No woman would go out without powdering her nose." She laughed. "We don't want them to look as if they just came out from under a bed." The grooming over, Bowes dabbed Vaseline on Betsy's nose to make it shinier. The dog promptly licked it off.

The night before the show, Betsy slept like a baby, while Bowes tossed and turned and woke with a headache. Betsy reported to Madison Square Garden at 10 a.m. and spent much of the

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morning sleeping in her kennel in the grooming area, unperturbed by the mass of dogs and humans everywhere.

The humans there made much more noise than the dogs; scarcely a bark could be heard among the 2,500 canine entrants. (Bowes's husband, Rick, her daughter Catherine, and some friends were there.) All around, dogs were getting their do's done. Some wore

hairnets or barrettes. There were dogs whose hair rivaled Marge Simpson's beehive, and there were walking furballs — was there really a dog in there?

Throughout the two-day show, Bowes was like a kid in a candy store, oohing and aahing at various dogs, hugging friends and even competitors from the dog world, and wishing various owners and handlers good luck as they prepared to go into the ring. She was thrilled when her friends

Kathi Brown of Stow and Susan Getgood of Hudson won "best of breed" for their 3-year-old Scottish terrier.

Everywhere you looked, the Garden was haunch-to-jowl dog. There were dogs on leads. Dogs in arms. Dogs in kennels. Dogs on

grooming tables. Dogs in the ring. Some dogs, usually the bigger breeds, dozed as if they hadn't a

care in the world. Others endured hour after hour of painstaking shampooing, blow-drying, teasing, spraying, and even makeup. There were giants like mastiffs, weighing more than 200 pounds each, and tiny dogs like Pekingese, which could fit in a bowl.

"I love this!" said Bowes, who has been breeding, training, and showing corgis for 37 years. "This is my life. When I walked into my first dog

'When I walked into my first dog show years ago, I walked into the rest of my life.'

ANNE BOWES, handler

show years ago, I walked into the rest of my life, and this is it." Before showing Betsy, she said she was somewhat nervous but mostly excited.

"This is not like any other show on earth," she said. "Some people put huge amounts of money into these dogs, and they look beautiful. If I win, I'll be absolutely thrilled, but if I don't, I'm honored to be here."

Earlier, she was asked: What happens if nature calls in the ring? She looked slightly appalled. "That's never happened. We make sure they've gone before they go in the ring." In Madison Square Garden, in the heart of Manhattan, where do 2,500 dogs go over two days of competition? To the doggy bathrooms, of course. They consist of penned-in stalls with wood shavings. And long lines. But unlike their human counterparts, the females did not have to wait longer than the males.

Late afternoon came, and it was time for the Pembroke Welsh corgis to head into Ring 1. Judge Donald Jones put the dogs through their paces again and again. It was clearly a tough choice for him, but in the end, Champion Heronsway Patriot's Dream — also known as Betsy — came in third, earning a first award of merit.

Bowes was pleased. "This was her first time at Westminster," she said. "She moved well, but she was not paying total attention to me.



GLOBE PHOTO/JOE TABACCA

Anne Bowes and her corgi Betsy take the ring at the Westminster Dog Show yesterday.

She's young, and she needs more seasoning."

Regardless, it was obvious that Betsy and her other owners, John and Pam Davies of Lake Placid, N.Y., were thrilled to be at the show. "This [award] is what we hoped to get," John said.

Betsy, now officially off duty, was heading to their hotel room, where last night, instead of sleeping in her kennel, she would be allowed to sleep on their bed, with them.